

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 27, 2006

2006-0036 – Centex Homes [Applicant/Owner]: Application for a Special Development Permit (SDP) on a 4.8-acre site to modify a previously approved SDP (10/25/05) to allow for an increase in height from two to three stories and an increase of approximately 370 square feet to one of three plans. The property is located at **610 Alberta Avenue** (near Hollenbeck Av) in an R-2/PD (Low-Medium Density Residential/Planned Development) Zoning District. (APN: 323-33-062) GC

Gerri Caruso, Principal Planner, presented the staff report. Staff is recommending denial of this application due to the inability to make the required findings. Staff reviewed the proposed architecture and found that the third story was not well integrated into the home that was designed to be two stories. Staff feels that the three-story homes are not consistent with the neighborhood or with the City of Sunnyvale at-large. Ms. Caruso said if the Commission is able to make the finding that staff is recommending approval subject to the Conditions of Approval (COA). She said one COA to note is that staff continues to feel that there are parking issues with this site plan and if the third-story plans are approved that the additional vehicle parking would be required due to additional intensity.

Comm. Sulser said during the Study Session he had recommended if the applicant wanted to pursue the three-story plans that they might want to cluster these to the edge of the site. Ms. Caruso said that the applicant is available to answer that, but that staff had been informed that due to the applicant's time schedule, they did not want to use the time to redesign the project site plan.

Chair Hungerford opened the public hearing.

Jeff Jacobs, applicant with Centex Homes, presented a PowerPoint presentation. He said Centex has been involved with this project for about 14 months and he thanked the Planning Commission for the approvals that Centex has received thus far. He said he hopes the Commission is pleased with the progress being made so far with the closure of the Mobile Home Park. He said after the approvals received last fall, Centex went into a more intensive planning phase and saw the opportunity to provide the proposed enhancement. He said Centex will be replacing 68 mobile homes with 55 single-family homes. He said that the living areas in homes are becoming smaller and homes are in need of more living area. He said this proposal has three designs. He said Plan 2 of the designs would include a third story option. He said the addition of the third story is an eclectic style of architecture and would only be on 18 of the 55 homes. He provided some suggestions of what the third story could be used for. He said this development, formerly Oasis, will now officially be called Trellis. He

addressed several of the concerns brought up in the Study Session on February 13, 2006. He said with the addition of the three-story homes the FAR will increase 9%. He said in regards to clustering the three-story homes, they did consider the suggestion, but he said as a production builder on a tight site they need to build in order and they would like to be able to offer a little bit of everything as they go through. He said they have reduced the plate line down from 9 feet to 8 feet. He said several Commissioners were interested in providing basements. He said they have not been able to see a production builder be able to successfully go through a neighborhood and build basements. He said they are not convinced that they could build basements that would stay dry. He said that this development is overparked right now. He said if the application is approved and if parking spaces had to be added, it would be very challenging for the current site plan. He said when considering the building height variance that the height would only be intermittent. He also pointed out that the February 2006 Sunset magazine featured Centex' Rivermark development in Santa Clara as one of the 10 Best Places to Live on the West Coast. He said the Rivermark development is about 90% three-story homes. He said he thinks that the three-story homes are a coming thing. He said he looks forward to any questions the Commission may have and hopefully approval of the proposal tonight.

Comm. Simons said in regards to basements that this site is one of the higher sites in the City and he did not think there would be an issue with water. Comm. Simons said that this site is a tight space and that he thought it would a benefit as you could build the basements all at once rather than one at a time which would be more cost effective. Mr. Jacobs said he is not worried about ground water, but more concerned with heavy landscape watering and how it could affect the foundation. He said that Centex is not comfortable with building basements at this time.

Comm. Sulser asked about the comparison of this project to the Rivermark development in Santa Clara and asked if this is a different housing stock. Mr. Jacobs six different product types in the Rivermark development.

Harriet Rowe, a Sunnyvale resident, referred to page 8 of report regarding basements. She said that we do have the technology and materials today to build basements that will stay dry and that it is more whether you want to do it or not. She said report says "The applicant has chosen to not modify the proposed architecture in response to the Study Session comments." Ms. Rowe said that she feels the staff has gone out-of-their-way to work with the applicant and that the developer now wants more height. She said the number of stories found in this area is two-story. She also said she thinks this development will be less houses, but more traffic than the Mobile Home Park. She said the look is considered "eclectic", but that she has very negative feelings about the proposed architecture. She encouraged the Planning Commission to go along with the staff recommendation.

Mr. Jacobs said that he did not want to imply that the basements cannot be done, but that Centex does not feel, at this time, prepared to build basements. He thanked Ms. Caruso and Commission for helping move this project through the process and asks for the Commission's approval on this enhancement.

Chair Hungerford closed the public hearing.

Ms. Caruso confirmed with the Commission that they were viewing the correct design plans for this proposal.

Comm. Klein moved for Alternative 1, to deny the Special Development Permit. Comm. Sulser seconded.

Comm. Klein said he could not make the findings. He said he would like to see basements added to homes in developments as his house is 75 years old and has a basement that is very useful and stays dry. He said he thinks the three-story homes do not fit with the architecture of the neighborhood, and combined with the variance and parking issues that he cannot see adding a third story to every third house in the project. He said he agrees that people are looking for additional space, but that the visual look of the project asks for more than what Sunnyvale currently has.

Comm. Sulser said he will be supporting the motion and that he does not feel this project is compatible with the neighborhood.

Comm. Babcock said she will be supporting the motion as she feels this is too high-density for this neighborhood. She said, for Sunnyvale, that Centex is behind the times on basements, but ahead of their time for three-stories.

Comm. Simons said he agrees with his fellow commissioners. He said that he understands that Centex is several years away from building basements, but that Sunnyvale is now at the point with development projects that neighbors are concerned about project densities, economic desirability and usefulness of developments.

Final Action:

Comm. Klein made a motion on 2006-0036 to deny the Special Development Permit. Comm. Sulser seconded.
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Motion carried unanimously, 5-0, Vice Chair Fussell absent.
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This item is appealable to City Council no later than March 14, 2006.